

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
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May 1, 2014

The Honorable Fred Upton  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ed Whitfield  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Energy and Power  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C., 20515

Dear Chairman Upton and Chairman Whitfield:

In recent weeks, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has released major reports on climate change impacts and mitigation.<sup>1</sup> We are writing to request that the Committee hold hearings with the world's leading climate scientists about the findings of these new reports.

The IPCC is the foremost international scientific body for the assessment of climate change. Its Fifth Assessment Report is the culmination of years of scientific work and provides the state of the science on climate change. The impacts and mitigation volumes of the Fifth Assessment Report were written by over 1,100 authors and editors from around the globe and cite 22,000 peer-reviewed scientific papers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Working Group II Contribution to IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability* (Mar. 30, 2014) (online at <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg2/>); Working Group III Contribution to IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, *Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change* (Apr. 13, 2014) (online at <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg3/>).

<sup>2</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Fact Sheets WGII and III* (online at [www.ipcc.ch](http://www.ipcc.ch)).

The findings of these reports are sobering. The IPCC reports make it clear that climate change is already happening and everyone is vulnerable to its impacts. According to IPCC Chairman Rajendra Pachauri, “Nobody on this planet is going to be untouched by climate change.”<sup>3</sup> However, the poorest populations will shoulder the worst impacts. Some low-lying developing countries are projected to face very expensive damages that could cost several percentage points of their nation’s GDP.<sup>4</sup>

The latest science shows that climate change is expected to exacerbate heat waves, droughts, wildfires, floods, and water- and vector-borne diseases, which will pose greater risks to human health and lives around the world.<sup>5</sup> Heat waves are of particular concern to human health in North America.<sup>6</sup> According to the IPCC, “The capacity of the human body to thermoregulate may be exceeded on a regular basis” in a warmer planet, compromising normal human activities like working outdoors and growing food during the summer.<sup>7</sup> Wheat and corn yields are already experiencing negative impacts due to climate change, and after 2050, the risk of overall declines in crop yields increases substantially.<sup>8</sup> Increasing global temperatures combined with an increase in food demand “poses large risks to food security globally and regionally.”<sup>9</sup> According to IPCC author Michael Oppenheimer, “Climate change is acting as a brake. We need yields to grow to meet growing demand, but already climate change is slowing those yields.”<sup>10</sup>

The IPCC’s mitigation report demonstrates that we must act now if we are to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. If serious action to reduce carbon emissions is not taken soon, the world is on a path to dramatically overshoot the atmospheric concentration of 450 parts per

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<sup>3</sup> IPCC AR5 WGII Press Conference (Mar. 31, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Working Group II Contribution to IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability, Summary for Policy Makers* at 16 (Mar. 30, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 20.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at Box SPM.2 Table 1.

<sup>7</sup> Working Group II Contribution to IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, at Chapter 11, pg 4 (Mar. 31, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Working Group II Contribution to IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability, Summary for Policy Makers* at 17 (Mar. 30, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 18.

<sup>10</sup> The Guardian, *Climate change a threat to security, food and humankind - IPCC report* (Mar. 31, 2014) (online at [www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/mar/31/climate-change-threat-food-security-humankind](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/mar/31/climate-change-threat-food-security-humankind)).

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million of carbon dioxide required to limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius.<sup>11</sup> Total human-caused greenhouse gas emissions were the highest in human history between 2000 and 2010.<sup>12</sup> Business as usual would result in dangerous atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations of between 750 and 1300 parts per million by 2100, resulting in temperature increases of as much as 8 degrees Celsius.<sup>13</sup>

The IPCC found that delaying mitigation actions until 2020 or 2030 would increase mitigation costs by 28% to 44%.<sup>14</sup> As European Union Commissioner Connie Hedegaard explained, "The report is clear: the more you wait, the more it will cost [and] the more difficult it will become."<sup>15</sup>

Adaptation can play a role in minimizing the risks of climate change, but according to IPCC coordinating lead author Patricia Romero Lankao, "we have a closing window of opportunity" to take action to curb climate change.<sup>16</sup> The IPCC reports emphasize that the sooner we act to reduce emissions, the less expensive it will be to endure the impacts of a warming planet.

As the Committee responsible for the nation's energy policy, we should hear directly from the IPCC about the risks posed by climate change and the opportunities to mitigate those risks in a cost-effective manner. We urge you to schedule a hearing with the world's preeminent climate scientists as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman  
Ranking Member



Bobby L. Rush  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Energy and Power

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<sup>11</sup> Working Group III Contribution to IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, *Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change, Summary for Policy Makers* at 15 (Apr. 13, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 5.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>14</sup> *Id.* at 18.

<sup>15</sup> The Guardian, *IPCC climate change report: averting catastrophe is eminently affordable* (Apr. 13, 2014) (online at [www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/apr/13/averting-climate-change-catastrophe-is-affordable-says-ipcc-report-un](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/apr/13/averting-climate-change-catastrophe-is-affordable-says-ipcc-report-un)).

<sup>16</sup> E&E Climate Wire, *Climate change impacts are happening; the window of opportunity to act is closing – report* (Mar. 31, 2014).